

Case Study: Kawahara increases productivity without increasing staff

The Grower:

Kawahara Nurseries is a family affair. Founded over 70 years ago by Sam and Jean Kawahara and their four children on a 2-acre nursery in San Lorenzo, California, they began as the place to go for jumbo pack varieties. Now in both Morgan Hill and Gilroy, California, and run by David and John Kawahara, Kawahara Nurseries spans 140 acres. They're a leading wholesale supplier of high quality nursery plants for the California region, growing premium succulents, annuals, perennials, and organics.

The Issue:

Kawahara has two main growing sites with all the fulfillment complexities that implies. Cross-docking product is difficult and time consuming. Supermarket requirements make racking complex, further slowing down the process. Inefficient labeling is also a concern. In an effort to streamline their entire process, Kawahara asked SBI to develop real-world software solutions based on lean flow principles.

The Solution:

In theory, lean flow is all about efficiency in process so this challenge was a perfect fit for SBI's process-driven software system. Working together, our teams determined that several key stages of the process slowed down Kawahara's overall efficiency. For their two growing sites, we built a cross-

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Josh Kawahara, Kawahara Nurseries

docking and rack transfer procedure to reduce costs on order fulfillment between sites. SBI's racking software is the most robust in the industry and provided Kawahara several key advantages. First, we built in the ability to cross-sort orders between sites. Next, we applied a lean flow process specialized for supermarket and capacity management, allowing Kawahara to build customer racks and route them to supermarkets in a single step. Product is racked and loaded in reverse order of the delivery route so each stop requires minimal effort.

We also streamlined their label printing, so a scan of a rack label prints the labels for all the individual plants on that rack. One click starts multiple printers, reducing what used to be a slow, time-consuming step to one click. The result? Kawahara is shipping 20% more inventory in the same time period without adding staff.

Like any theory, lean flow only works with the right logic to drive it in practice. The SBI ecosystem is built from the ground up with grower's process in mind. Our greatest successes come from strong partnerships with growers, identifying parts of their process that can improve and applying the right software as a solution. 

Case Study Quick Look

CHALLENGE

Develop real-life applications of lean flow principles to streamline operations & improve efficiency

RESULTS

Shipping 20% more inventory with same size team

Automated label printing

COMPANY

Kawahara Nurseries

LOCATION

Morgan Hill and Gilroy, California

CROPS

Specializing in high quality nursery plants

PRODUCTION SPACE

140 acres at two locations

CUSTOMER MIX

Box store supplier to Home Depot, Orchard Supply, others